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Subject: N&O: NC officials deny environmental permit for Atlantic Coast Pipeline

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BY JOHN MURAWSKI

jmurawski@newsobserver.com

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Gov. Roy Cooper's administration has rejected an application by Duke Energy and three other energy companies to build an interstate pipeline to carry natural gas from West Virginia into North Carolina.

The letter of disapproval from the N.C. Department of Environmental Quality is the first decision on the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline from any government agency – state or federal – in the three states the project would traverse. Duke Energy is also expecting a decision as early as this month from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

The N.C. Department of Environmental Quality said the 600-mile underground pipeline, which would travel through eight North Carolina counties, including Johnston and Nash, does not meet the state's standards for erosion and sediment control. The agency has asked Charlotte-based Duke and its partners to resubmit the application with additional information within 15 days, or to contest the agency's disapproval and request a hearing within 60 days.

The environmental permit is the main hurdle the Atlantic Coast Pipeline needs to clear in North Carolina. Duke issued a statement saying it will submit the information requested.

"The NC DEQ did not reject the ACP erosion and sedimentation control plan; they simply asked for more information," Duke said. "It's a normal part of the process for agencies to ask for additional information before making a final decision.

"We've provided most of the requested information already, and we expect to provide the rest later this week," Duke said. "That should resolve the issue and allow the agency to complete its review."

One of the opponents of the project characterized the agency's decision as more than a routine matter.

"At the very least, it represents a significant hurdle the Atlantic Coast Pipeline will have to overcome," said Doug Jackson, spokesman for the Sierra Club.

The Department of Environmental Quality issued the ruling Sept. 26 and posted it online Friday. The agency wants the application to include the project's effects on streams and wetlands, and to include various other calculations, maps and documentation.

Duke applied for the project with Virginia-based Dominion Energy, Georgia-based Southern Energy and Piedmont Natural Gas, the Charlotte natural gas utility that Duke acquired last year.

The pipeline would carry natural gas from the Marcellus Shale, where it would be extracted through hydraulic

fracturing, or fracking, and delivered to North Carolina to supply fuel to run electric power plants in this state, as well as to heat homes and businesses.

John Murawski: 919-829-8932, @johnmurawski

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